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ABSTRACT

This research project attempted to ascertain women's work values, and how these values might be related to specific demographic variables. A Work Value Scale was utilized. The six values examined were: dominance-recognition, economic, independence, interesting activity, mastery-achievement, and social. There were seven demographic variables: marital status, age, education, current employment status, career pattern, socioeconomic class, and field of work. A sample of 1,871 women responded to a mailed questionnaire. The respondents tended to have better than average education. Seven specific hypotheses were tested, based on the premise that the demographic situation of the woman will in large part determine her work values. Generally, it was found that all women placed the greatest emphasis on the mastery-achievement value, and the least emphasis on dominance-recognition. The work values of dominance-recognition, mastery-achievement and economic can probably be predicted through knowledge of a woman's field of work, and the interesting activity value can be predicted through educational attainment and work pattern. The author points out the value of this study for guidance and counseling in the preparation of girls and women for their participation in the labor force. (NG)

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE WORK VALUES OF WOMEN: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING[1]

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Currently there exists a general resurgence of interest and concern about women in the world of work. However, little research has been conducted for the purpose of examining the reasons why women work and the satisfactions which they seek from work. Most of the research basic to the theories of vocational development has been undertaken with men and the results of these research studies have been indiscriminately applied to women. Many of these career pattern studies are not applicable because sex differences were initially excluded.

There also seems to be an increasing tendency to plan studies which are based upon various personality theories. In these studies the investigators have attempted to assess the personality traits of career-oriented women vs. homemaking-oriented women in an endeavor to predict the future role of an individual. The results from the majority of these studies have been inconclusive and insignificant, which is not unexpected, since the attempt to dichotomize the career development pattern into the either/or concept fails to recognize the multiple and interchangeable roles of women.

Many individuals and groups have begun to raise questions regarding the conventional manner by which counselors undertake the educational and vocational planning process with girls and women. An increasing perception of what work means to women and an understanding of the values and satisfactions

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sought from work can assist counselors in the educational and vocational counseling of girls.

PROBLEM

The major aim of this study was to provide germane research about women's work values and how these work values may be related to specific demographic variables. Lorraine D. Eyde (1962) developed a Work Values Scale which isolated six work values. The current study represented an attempt to expand upon Eyde's original research. The six work values examined were: dominance-recognition, economic, independence, interesting activity, mastery-achievement, and social. The seven demographic variables selected to be associated with the work values were: marital status, age, education, current employment status, career pattern, socioeconomic class, and field of work.

A number of variables interact in the formation of an individual's hierarchy of work values. Neither the values nor the demographic variables investigated exhaust either category. This has placed certain limitations on the study and upon the application of its findings.

PROCEDURES

Exploratory letters outlining the purpose and design of the study were sent to a variety of businesses and organizations, seeking to enlist their cooperation. Respondents' names were selected at random from mailing lists provided by the cooperating groups.

A total of 4,003 questionnaires were mailed to these women. Two thousand one hundred forty-six were returned, for a 54 percent response. Two hundred seventy-five invalid questionnaires reduced the total population studied to 1,871 women. The respondents tended to be better educated than the average woman, according to the 1960 census figures for New York State.

The scale used was a forced choice ipsative scale, in which each one of the six values appeared once in each of 14 sets. The respondents rank-ordered their answers in each set.

In order to ascertain the current reliability of the scale, the test-re-test technique was used. Fifty women were selected at random for retesting. Forty-eight of this group replied. The reliability coefficients obtained for the Work Values Scale are reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Reliability Coefficients: Work Values Scale

Work Value	Reliability Coefficient
Dominance-Recognition	.76
Economic	.81
Independence	.69
Interesting Activity	.77
Mastery-Achievement	.75
Social	.52

The rankings were normalized since the ranking procedure produced a uniform distribution rather than a normal distribution. The scores obtained from the normalizing procedure were combined to calculate total scores for the six factors. Mean scores and standard deviations for the values were computed for each variable. The t-test was used to compare the score differences for each set of variables in order to test the hypotheses. The statistical technique used to determine the relative importance of several factors in predicting another factor was stepwise multiple regression.

The six values were used as dependent variables and the demographic variables were used as the independent variables. Chi-square values were computed for the women's responses to attitudinal questions relating to their desire to work.

RESULTS

Seven hypotheses were tested in this study.

Hypothesis #1. "Women who differ in their marital status will seek different values from work." There was a higher degree of similarity between the responses of the single, divorced, separated, and widowed women than the married women who formed a discrete category. All women placed great emphasis upon the mastery-achievement value, but married women showed the most intensity. Single, divorced, widowed, and separated women showed a higher need for work to provide independence than did married women. Divorced, separated, and widowed women particularly exhibited an aversion to seeking dominance-recognition from their work. This particular value was not high for either the single or married women. The greatest spread among the groups was obtained for the value of work as providing interesting activity. Married women had higher expectations for work to be interesting, whereas single women either had lost this expectation through work experience or they never had it. The economic value of work was low for all women, especially married. Single and divorced women did not vary significantly in their responses regarding economic values. All women rated the social value of work highly, with married women displaying the greatest expectations of work providing social opportunity.

Hypothesis #2. "Women who differ in their age will seek different values from work." All women, regardless of their age, placed the greatest emphasis upon the mastery-achievement value. The importance of work providing independence was less for women in the 25-44 age brackets and tended to be greater for women at the opposite ends of the age scale. The oldest women in the study displayed the greatest need for independence. Most of the women, regardless of their age, tended to rate the dominance-recognition value rather low. The youngest women had the lowest expectation for work to be interesting, whereas, the women in the 35-44 age group had the highest expectations. The economic value of work was not a foremost value for any age group. However, younger women tended to attach a higher priority to the economic rewards of work. The oldest age group placed the least priority on this value, and the results seemed to say that the economic value of work tends to decrease as a woman's maturity increases. The expectation that work would yield social rewards was highest for women in the oldest age group while the younger women showed less intensity. It may be that the desirability of work increases as a woman becomes further removed from the labor market.

Hypothesis #3. "Women who differ in their educational attainment will seek different values from work." All women, regardless of their education, placed the greatest emphasis upon the mastery-achievement value. The importance of work providing independence was highest for women who had less education. Most women, regardless of their education, tended to rate dominance-recognition value rather low. However, this value increased with education. Women with the least education had the lowest expectation for work to be interesting. Although the economic value of work was low for all women, the value generally tended to decrease in importance as a woman's education increased. Allwomen rated the social value of work highly. Women with the most education anticipated that work would provide the greatest social value.

Hypothesis #4. "Women who differ in their current employment status will seek different values from work." All women placed great emphasis upon the mastery-achievement value. Women who were employed full-time showed the greatest need for work to provide independence, whereas, those working part-time showed the least expectation. All groups rated the need for dominance-recognition low. The greatest spread was obtained for the value of work providing interesting activity. Women who were employed part-time had greater expectations for work to be interesting, whereas, women who were employed full-time either had lost this expectation or never held this value. Generally, the economic value of work was low for all women. All four categories of women rated the social value of work highly with volunteer workers being more concerned with social value than women employed full-time.

Hypothesis #5. "Women who differ in their career pattern will seek different values from work." The questionnaire utilized the five-fold classification defined by Donald E. Super (1957). He defined these groups as:

1. Stable Homemaking -- Never worked
2. Conventional -- Work, Married, Homemaker
3. Stable Working -- Always Worked, Never a Full-Time Homemaker
4. Double Tract -- Combined Work and Homemaking
5. Interrupted -- Work, Married, Homemaker, Returned to Work

Once again all women placed the greatest emphasis upon the mastery-achievement value. Women who followed a stable working pattern showed the highest need for work to provide independence while those who had a conventional career pattern showed the least need. The more a woman's career approached a stable working pattern, the more likely it was that she would exhibit the need for work to provide independence. The value of dominance-recognition generally was important. Women with stable working patterns showed the least expectation for work to be interesting, in contrast to women who had an interrupted career pattern. The economic value of work was again low in the value hierarchies of all groups

of women. The more a woman's career pattern approximated a stable working pattern, the less she anticipated that work would yield social values.

Hypothesis #6. "Women who differ in their socioeconomic class will seek different values from work." All women continued to place the greatest emphasis upon the mastery-achievement value. The women in the highest socioeconomic class showed the most intensity of feeling that work should yield this value while women from the lowest class had the strongest need for work to provide independence. Although women from all socioeconomic classes rated dominance-recognition low, the highest class still showed the strongest need while the lowest class displayed the least need. The lowest expectation for work to be interesting was attributed to the lowest socioeconomic class. The higher a woman's socioeconomic class, the less importance she attached to the economic value of work and the higher was her expectation that work would yield social values.

Hypothesis #7. "Women who differ in their field of work will seek different values from work." Mastery-achievement was once again of primary importance to all women. Women in administrative positions showed the greatest need for work to yield this value, whereas, the women in service occupations showed the least expectation. The need for work to provide independence was greatest for women in administrative positions, in clerical jobs, and factory work. Dominance-recognition appeared to be a relatively unimportant value for most women, although it was higher for women in executive jobs and lower for women engaged in factory work. The groups of women who were most concerned about the work value of interesting activity were full-time homemakers and bookkeepers while factory workers expressed the least expectation for work to be interesting. The greater one's salary the less important was the economic value of work.

Those women who were full-time homemakers showed the greatest hope that work would yield social rewards and women administrators sought this value the least.

SUMMARY

The findings indicated that the work values of women can be linked to specific demographic variables. One might speculate that not only do these values vary among the women according to demographic variables, but also that these values differ from men's work values. All women demonstrated a high need for work to yield the mastery-achievement and social values, which were not linked to any specific demographic variables.

It was found that the Work Values Scale was an effective instrument for predictive purposes. The work values of mastery-achievement, dominance-recognition, and economic can be predicted through knowledge of a woman's field of work. The value of interesting activity can be predicted through the use of two demographic variables: educational attainment and work pattern.

This study stresses the need for the guidance and counseling profession to accept and meet the challenges which confront them in preparing girls and women for the world of work. In some instances, the study showed that women who never worked had little conception of the world of work. Women who had active roles in the labor market held lower expectations about the instrinsic rewards of work. The extrinsic rewards seemed to become more dominant if a woman had less education or held a job requiring less skill. Since many of the women entering the labor market will be concentrated in low-paying and low-status occupations, it behooves educators to examine the realities of the preparation which is given to these women and the vocational and educational guidance which they receive.

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